

OUTWOODS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
13TH APRIL 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Bailey, Campsall, Fryer (Chair), Parsons, Smidowicz, Tillotson and PB, RE (Vice-Chair), and CN

Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: Cllr Morgan, K Harris

1. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Disclosures of personal interests were made as follows:

- (i) Cllr Smidowicz as a member of Charnwood Arts Council.
- (ii) Cllr Bailey, as Chair of Charnwood Forest Regional Park and farms land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iii) PB who farms land adjacent to the Outwoods.
- (iv) RE whose wife is a member of ArtsSpace Loughborough.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2022 were agreed.

3. RESIGNATION OF TRUSTEE

It was noted that JN had resigned from the Committee for personal reasons. The Committee recognised her many years of support as a long-standing Trustee and wished to thank her for her participation and support to the Outwoods. It was noted that JN had been a Harry Bowler Trustee and that it was the responsibility of the remaining Harry Bowler Trustee to recommend a new appointee.

AGREED to write a letter on behalf of the Committee thanking JN for her service to the Committee.

4. OFFICER UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted (item 5 on the agenda). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted salient points in the report as follows:

- the opening of the Café had been well attended. It was noted at the opening event that the plaque for Harry Bowler had been relocated from the carpark gates to the wall of the café but that there was not a plaque commemorating the other original Donor Trustee of the Outwoods Management Committee, Alan Moss. Trustees proposed that a plaque was created to commemorate Alan Moss.

- Officers were working with the Geo Park to organise the Charcoal Burning event in June although the date had not yet been confirmed. A voluntary organisation had offered to support the charcoal burning and had participated in events held in the National Forest including tutorials. The Organisation was planning to arrange educational and arts sessions during the Charcoal burning event and had suggested that the charcoal be given to the Committee / Council. Early discussions had been held between officers and the Café owner to store the charcoal and possibly sell some bags from the Café.
- the tree felling and replanting contracts included a two-year period of aftercare. The first season of tree felling in 2019 had just completed its aftercare programme and further maintenance would now be included in the Rangers tasks.
- the car park bay designation would be underway soon and would increase capacity through better space utilisation. Enforcement activity had been requested and it was anticipated that an initial friendly reminder would be used followed by ticketing if this was required. Plans were in progress to encourage the use of other car parks further from the Outwoods, which would be free to park in.

Summary of discussion:

- charcoal burned at Bradgate Park had been sold and the profits used for maintenance of the Park. It would be beneficial if a similar approach could be taken with the Outwoods charcoal.
- the percentage of losses after planting was thought to be low but exact numbers could be confirmed by officers after the meeting.
- the tree guards were used to protect young trees from small mammals and strong weather. They were not biodegradable, as appropriate materials had not yet been approved by Forestry England, but they could be recycled. It was important to ensure the guards were removed when they were no longer required, and this was possibly a task the Green Gym Volunteers could undertake.
- that signage for the Nanpantan Road Sports Ground and Moat Road car parks should be improved and made clearer to highlight their availability for access to the Outwoods. Officers were considering renaming the Sports Ground Carpark to 'Lower Outwoods Carpark', and this was welcomed by the Committee.
- whether the location of the Nanpantan Road Cemetery could impact on the number of spaces free for parking in the car park. The cemetery did have its own car park and peak times of use was unlikely to clash with peak times of visitors to the Outwoods. However, if a football match was being held at the Sports Ground this could make the car park busy.
- the gates at the Outwoods Car park were not able to be closed. It had been proposed to install crocodile teeth on the exit from the car park which would have allowed the entry side of the gate to be closed but this had not taken place. The matter was being followed up by officers but had been hampered by recent staff changes within the team.

It was noted that the Senior Green Spaces Officer had left Charnwood Borough Council and the Trustees wished to thank him for his expertise and knowledge which he had brought to his work in the Outwoods and with the Committee.

AGREED

1. that a plaque commemorating Alan Moss be created for attaching to the wall of the Café;
2. that the Committee is updated on progress with arranging the Charcoal Burning Event in the Outwoods;
3. that the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces confirms the number of losses to the Committee from the tree planting programme.
4. that the report be noted.

5. FINANCE UPDATE REPORT

A report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces was submitted that covered the revenue budget (item 6 on the agenda).

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces noted that there had been a request at the last meeting for the 'Fees & Charges Misc' category in the budget information to be itemised separately to clearly identify the tree felling income. He explained that the income under this category in this report was all from the sale of timber. He also drew the Committee's attention to the Year-on-Year Net Spend and that he would continue to provide this information at the end of every financial year. He noted that the spend was going down and he anticipated this trend to continue.

In response to a question, it was explained that the one-off contribution of £36K to the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership had been a match funding contribution for the duration of the project and that the cost of work to be completed by the Partnership would be of greater value.

AGREED that the report be noted.

6. ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AT THE OUTWOODS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

An update regarding activities and operational management at the Outwoods was submitted (item 7 on the agenda). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces highlighted that the operations yard access had been changed to the right-hand side of the toilets to provide better access to the Events Space and café. The fencing would also soon be improved, as it was currently temporary. He noted that a bluebell walk would be arranged shortly with the Head Ranger and would be publicised using the usual Council social media methods.

Trustees discussed whether a calendar could be created for 2023 as the photos included in the report were of excellent quality and could be used in a calendar if the Head Ranger gave his permission (as the photographer). The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces suggested that a photo competition could be run via the Council's Twitter account for future years, which was considered a good proposal by the Committee.

The Committee wished to thank the Rangers for their hard work and asked that the Report be circulated to all councillors after the meeting.

AGREED

1. That the Ranger's report be circulated to all councillors after the meeting and that this report is routinely circulated after every future meeting;
2. That officers investigate designing an Outwoods calendar for 2023;
3. That the 'Activities and Operational Management at the Outwoods since the last meeting' report be renamed to 'the Rangers Report' in future agendas.
4. that the contents of the report be noted.

7. A.O.B

The Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces drew the Committee's attention to the recent reports of fires at the Outwoods. He noted that there had been a small amount of damage. In addition, there had been some enquiries regarding the tree felling programme. He had suggested that the querent wrote to the Committee to express their concerns. Trustees discussed the following:

- the amount of resources that had been required to deal with the fires, the damage that had been caused and whether fire beaters would be appropriate. It was noted that fire beaters were no longer considered suitable and that the fires may have been started deliberately in the fields near the kissing gate. Due to the location of the fires, they had been spotted quickly and this had resulted in less damage to the woods itself.
- the increase in litter since the café had been opened. Additional litter bins could be provided, and signage improved in the café area. The increase in litter bin emptying would continue. Discussions with the café owner were ongoing regarding the provision of reusable cups.
- the implementation of additional interpretation boards in the café / events area identifying species to look for in the woods and covering seasonal changes. It was suggested a 'nest cam' could also be installed.

The dates of future meetings were confirmed and that the venue and earlier start time was considered acceptable for future meetings.

ADDENDUM - DECISIONS WHEREBY A VOTE WAS TAKEN

At the meeting of the Committee held on 6th September 2017 it was agreed that when the Committee voted by a show of hands on decisions made by the Committee that this information was documented as an addendum to the minutes (minute 2.2 refers).

NONE